

GENDER SEXUALITY & THE CHURCH

Beauty for Ashes: Thinking Biblically
About Pain and Suffering

Two Important Texts:

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Isaiah 61:1-3

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; **to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;** that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

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I Peter 5:10

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

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- II. It presents a very real and present danger to our lives—it can do great spiritual damage to us and to others.
- III. It presents a great spiritual opportunity for us and for the gospel.

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- B. Suffering disorients and confuses us because we don't always know the reason and objective for our suffering and pain.
- C. Suffering, especially when prolonged and painful, causes me to doubt fundamental realities about God.
- D. God acknowledges the reality of suffering in the lives of His children (1 Peter 4:12; 4:19; 5:10).

II. Understanding the Roots of Pain and Suffering

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B. Specifically – Depravity and Brokenness of the Curse

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- 5) Suffering that comes from profound confusion.
- 6) Suffering that comes because of death.

III. Embracing God's Reason for Pain and Suffering

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A. Suffering well is good for us (James 1:2-4).

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

III. Embracing God's Reason for Pain and Suffering

A. Suffering well is good for us (James 1:2-4).

B. Suffering well is good for others (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

“Blessed be the God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted by God.”

III. Embracing God's Reason for Pain and Suffering

C. Suffering well is good for the Gospel (Phil. 1:12-13)

“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places...”

III. Embracing God's Reason for Pain and Suffering

C. Suffering well is good for the Gospel (Phil. 1:12-13)

D. Suffering well brings glory to God (2 Cor. 12:7-9)

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

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- C. There is an ongoing upward response God desires.

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V. Looking Confidently for God's Resolution to Pain and Suffering

- A. God's Promise to Sustain us in this life (1 Peter 5:10).
- B. God's Promise to Reward us in the life to come (2 Cor. 4:16-17)
"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory..."

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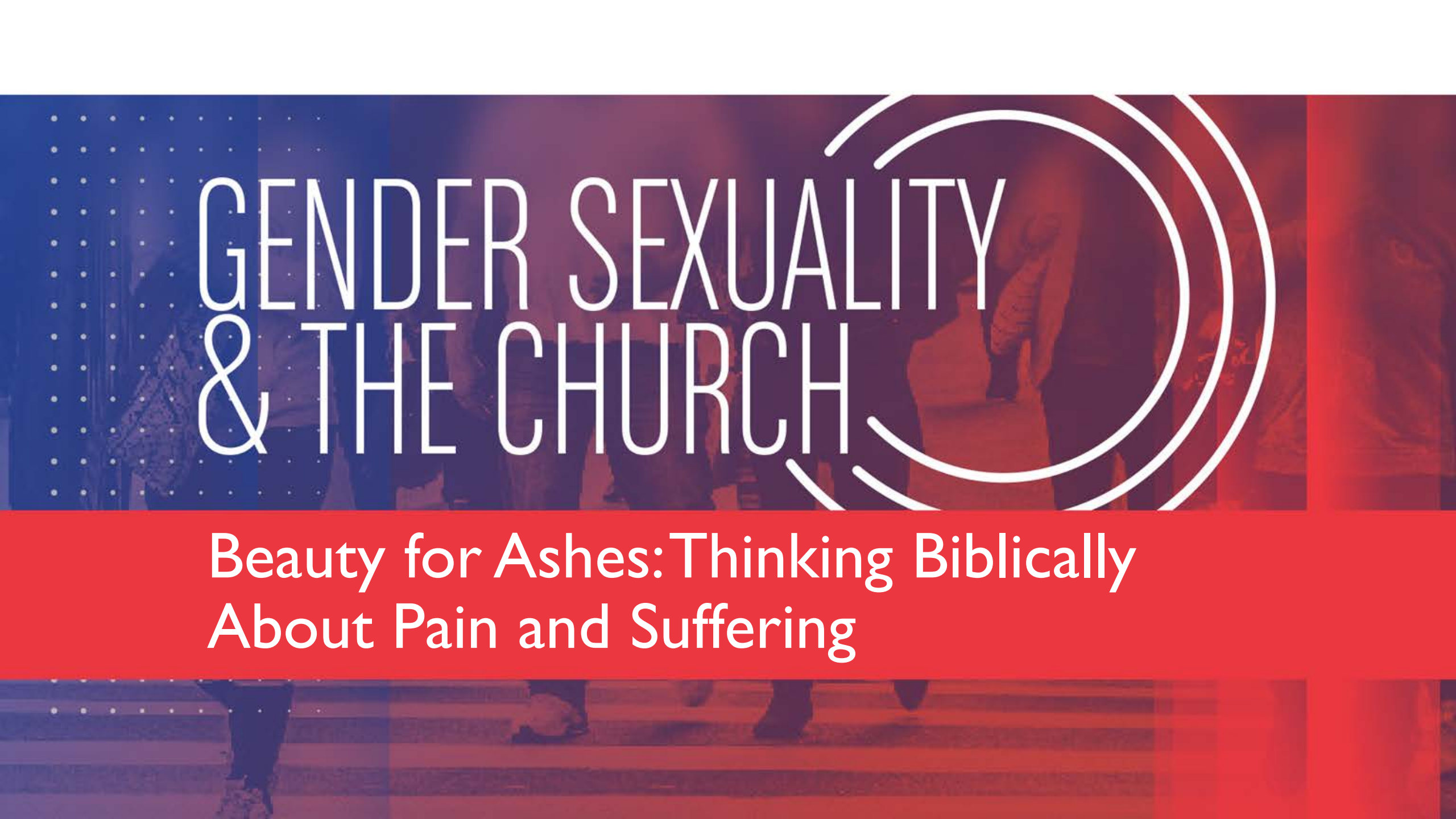
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4. God, who is ever faithful and strong, will sustain us in our suffering.
5. God, who is abundantly gracious and good, will one day resolve and remove our suffering and will reward us for it!



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